

TRUANCY PREVENTION IN ACTION

# GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING TRUANCY REDUCTION PROGRAMS



BY TED WESLEY AND  
PATRICIA CLOUD DUTTWEILER

Learn more about issues related to truancy prevention from all four monographs in this series.

## TRUANCY PREVENTION IN ACTION SERIES

*Legal and Economic Implications of Truancy*

*Best Practices and Model Truancy Programs*

*Planning, Collaboration, and Implementation Strategies for Truancy Programs*

*Guidelines for Evaluating Truancy Programs*

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College of Health, Education, and Human Development  
Clemson University  
209 Martin Street, Clemson, SC 29631-1555  
864-656-2599  
email [ndpc@clemson.edu](mailto:ndpc@clemson.edu)  
[www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org)

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The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) strives to build a network of key stakeholders who share the belief that improving school attendance and school attachment promotes achievement and school success. NCSE was established as a result of a decade of educational research about youth out of the educational mainstream conducted by the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children. NCSE promotes collaboration among courts, schools and law enforcement to solve problems at the community level. Additional information is available on their Web site found at [www.schoolengagement.org](http://www.schoolengagement.org).

The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children (CFFC), in collaboration with NCSE, is dedicated to improving the effectiveness of people, programs and organizations to achieve positive results for our most vulnerable families. CFFC works closely with partners to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of those working directly with families, children, youth, and communities. CFFC services include training and technical assistance, research and evaluation, strategic ventures, and infor-

mation resources. The CFFC website may be found at [www.coloradofoundation.org](http://www.coloradofoundation.org).

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

This monograph is intended as a guide to support self-evaluation of truancy reduction and prevention programs by those involved in their ongoing operations. The benefits of understanding how to use evaluation methods and information to realistically assess the value of truancy prevention programs, and the routine integration of evaluation into the operation of programs, will lead to more effective practices and greater benefits to young people.

Truancy behavior is multifaceted with an array of contributing risk factors and considerable ambiguity about which factors are in play in general situations or in individual cases. Therefore, effective interventions to reduce truancy tend to be similarly complex. The complexity of truancy intervention programs has a number of implications for the planning and practice of evaluation activities. Evaluating the processes and effects of such programs requires thoughtful consideration of the various service providers involved and the interactions among them, their respective contributions to program activities, specific beneficiaries to be served, intended program effects, and measurable or observable criteria defining successful program implementation and effectiveness in achieving objectives and goals.

## WHY EVALUATE?

Program evaluations are designed to both support and demonstrate program effectiveness. Evaluation determines truancy program effectiveness through various assessments addressing program goals and objectives and the strategies and activities aimed at accomplishing them. The key concept in evaluation is “value.” The two most important outcomes of evaluation are to demonstrate with clarity and validity the value of a program in its context and to understand how the program produces that value for beneficiaries in the program’s context. Evaluation research employs an array of social and organizational science research techniques to assess the value of the chosen methods in implementing programs and to measure the value of program activities in achieving their targeted services to beneficiaries. Evaluation enables programs to periodically review their goals and measure their progress

toward achieving them. Evaluation measures progress toward goal achievement and informs efforts to refine programs to increase their effectiveness in particular situations.

The most important use of evaluation is to guide program improvement. Evaluation facilitates informed decisions about improving the quality of program activities. Evaluation can suggest ways to refine or alter programs or services after measuring the success of implemented activities. Evidence-based understanding of factors contributing to program success supports a program's potential to serve as a model for effective replication or adaptation and increases the potential for dissemination of an effective practice to numerous other environments with attendant expansion of benefits for those the program is intended to serve.

A program can build ownership among stakeholders when everyone who is involved in evaluating a program becomes invested in its success. Evaluation also enables stakeholders to improve their communication and overall effectiveness and use evaluation results in organizing and structuring their activities to refine cross-agency strategies.

The processes of evaluation must be adapted to particular program goals, objectives, issues, and contexts. This complex of factors can be effectively addressed through a logical sequence of identifiable stages or phases from initial planning through final reporting:

- Identification of program components, elements, procedures, and activities to be evaluated
- Generation of evaluation questions
- Selection of evaluation design and procedures for data collection and analyses
- Instrumentation
- Data collection, analysis, summarization, and interpretation
- Preparation of the evaluation report

Promoting self-evaluation of programs by practitioners is a primary goal of this monograph. Although evaluation is based on research activities, it is not exclusively an activity for evaluation specialists. Evaluation is a populist rather than a specialist practice—aiming to produce practical information in the service of human beings and amenable to being done by almost



any program operator who cares to make it an integral part of their project management, as it should be. Essential program evaluation activities are readily accessible to program planners and operators. This monograph contains tools to assist program operators in developing a Logic Model for the evaluation of results-based truancy reduction programs; creating effective truancy reduction programs including guidelines and worksheets; and developing an action and evaluation plan for such programs.

## CONCLUSION

An effective truancy reduction program—just as any program designed to promote systemic change to improve the conditions of schools, youth, families, and communities—is dependent on careful attention to three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Evaluation should be an integral part of the effort from the beginning. Evaluation data can be used to guide program improvement by measuring the program’s progress in achieving its goals and can be used to refine or alter programs or services to maximize program value in serving its beneficiaries.

Strategies to reduce truancy require a major investment of resources and energy. Funding agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders want evidence that their investments are producing better outcomes for youth, families, and communities. Evaluation results can account for how resources are used and document program effectiveness to justify the costs of such efforts. Evaluation provides evidence to funding agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders that their investments are producing better outcomes for youth, families, and communities.

## INTRODUCTION

There is a familiar habit of mind that wants to simplify complex problems to a minimum possible set of components. Practitioners who work with issues negatively affecting youth often hear questions such as, “What is the *one thing* (or the *single most important thing*) that leads to . . . (truancy, dropout, bullying, etc.).” The corollary question is also often asked, “What is the *one thing* (or the *single most important thing*) that can be done to reduce . . . (truancy, dropout, bullying, etc.).” However, experience demonstrates that negative outcomes for youth, such as truancy, are multifaceted with an array of contributing risk factors and considerable ambiguity about what factors are in play in general situations or in individual cases. Therefore, effective interventions to reduce negative outcomes for youth tend to be similarly complex. Since truancy is a behavior with complex patterns of ingredients affecting different individuals in different ways, truancy reduction programs typically address a range of issues leading students to skip school. Baker, Sigmon, and Nugent (2001, p. 3) observe:

The [truancy] models that show the most promise, not only of reducing truancy, but also of affecting its risk factors, include several key components:

- Parental involvement
- Meaningful sanctions or consequences for truancy
- Meaningful incentives for school attendance
- Ongoing school-based truancy reduction programs
- Involvement of community resources (e.g., law enforcement)

Truancy reduction programs may involve a variety of services including law enforcement through police and family courts, mental health services, social services, health services, and services of other community-based agencies and organizations as well as schools themselves. Program components may include surveillance and reporting of chronically truant students, increasing family involvement in schools and in student behavior management, individual counseling, mentoring, academic support, or any number of activities targeting interacting issues that have been identified as risk factors contributing to truancy in a

particular situation. A few descriptions of typical multifaceted truancy reduction programs will be illustrative:

**The Louisville Truancy Program** seeks to remove or resolve all family barriers to regular school attendance and academic success. A community team which may include a judicial officer, school personnel, a social service provider, a drug/alcohol treatment provider, and a mental health counselor, is created to address these barriers through regular contact with the family and celebration of all successes. Case managers maintain contact with the families on a regular basis and court process is held weekly, at the school.

**Project Respect** uses family support practices to meet the academic and mental health needs of students facing truancy, suspension, or expulsion. Community agencies collaborate with schools to improve student achievement, coordinate community services, and promote healthy and safe learning environments. Community advocates work in elementary, middle and high schools encouraging parent participation in schools and coordinating family activities designed to improve family communication and functioning.

**Placer County Peer Court** has developed a truancy program with a local high school where students who previously had difficulty with attendance but have corrected their problem now sit as a panel hearing truancy citations issued by the high school. After three cuts or unexcused absences, the assistant principal issues a citation to the offending student. Judgments include mediation with teachers, community service, drug testing, parenting classes for the parents of the truant students, essays, confining the student to campus during lunch hours, taking the student's driver's license until grades and attendance improve, joining school or community activities, and tutoring.

**The YWCA Tates Creek Elementary Truancy Prevention Program** incorporates concepts of delinquency prevention by increasing school attachment and decreasing academic failure. Major program components are home visits, parenting and life skills, daily monitoring of attendance, monitoring of school grades, additional academic assistance during the school day and after school, family activities, and after-school activities.

*(Source: All program descriptions above were abstracted from the Model Program database of the National Dropout Prevention Center Web site, <http://www.dropoutprevention.org>.)*

The complexity of truancy intervention programs has a number of implications for the planning and practice of program evaluation activities. Evaluating the processes and effects of such multifaceted programs requires thoughtful consideration of the various service providers in a program and the interactions among them, their respective contributions to program activities, specific beneficiaries to be served, intended program effects, and measurable or observable criteria defining successful program implementation and effectiveness in achieving program objectives and goals.

## WHY EVALUATE?

The planning and execution of program evaluation is grounded in the reasons why such programs should be evaluated. Truancy program evaluations are designed to both support and demonstrate program effectiveness. Evaluations strengthen program design by clearly articulating shared goals and objectives. The data collected through evaluation facilitates making informed decisions about improving the quality of and making constructive changes in the program. Program evaluations also help identify and celebrate successes when desired outcomes are achieved (Yap, Aldersebaes, Railsback, Shaughnessy, & Speth, 2000).

The most important use of evaluation data is to *guide program improvement*. Evaluations enable programs to periodically review their goals and measure their progress toward achieving them and to suggest ways to refine or alter programs or services after measuring the success of the activities implemented. *Evaluation builds accountability*. Strategies to reduce truancy require a major investment of monetary, human, and material resources; time; and energy. Funding agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders want evidence that their investments are producing better outcomes for youth, families, and communities. Evaluation results should account for how resources are used and document program effectiveness to justify the costs of the effort. A program can *build ownership among stakeholders* when everyone who is involved in evaluating a program becomes invested in its success. Evaluation also enables the collaborative of stakeholders to *improve their communication and their overall effectiveness* and use evaluation results in organizing and structuring their activities to refine cross-agency strategies (*Putting the Pieces Together*, 2004).

Program evaluation is not intended to be, and should not be, a fault-finding practice. The key concept in evaluation is “value.” Evaluation research employs an array of social and organizational science research techniques to assess the value of program methods and implementations in promoting goal achievement and to measure the value of programs in achieving their targeted purposes. A guidebook from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (*Putting the Pieces Together*, 2004) suggests that evaluation does not need to be a dreaded, complicated, or negative activity. The evaluation process can highlight a program’s strengths and weaknesses and help orga-

nizations think creatively about new linkages when evaluation is viewed in the following light:

1. As an activity that is done *by and with* families and other collaborative partners [stakeholders], not *to* them;
2. As a continuous process of gathering information about a program to periodically assess its progress toward shared goals—a tool for measuring how strategies are working and whether they are achieving desired results;
3. As a method for using information to modify and improve strategies; and
4. As a means of improving accountability to partners, children, families, communities, and funding agencies.

In certain circumstances, properly designed evaluation programs can go beyond the immediate assessment of a particular program to the larger purpose of contributing to knowledge development and the improvement of practice. For instance, The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children (2005) is conducting evaluations of the Truancy Reduction Demonstration Programs for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The main purpose of these evaluations is to document the development of community-based programs across the country and to identify effective strategies that other communities can adopt in their truancy reduction efforts. A secondary purpose of the evaluations is to provide preliminary outcome data to identify specific interventions that are most effective in keeping youth in school. The Foundation is using a logic model of evaluation that defines progress from general goals to more specific strategies, to the results that have been achieved. A logic model should guide all planning and development activities, the design of evaluation methodologies, and cover the following topics:

- Needs and Capacities: “Why are we doing this?” and “What strengths do the youth, families, schools, service agencies, and community bring to the program?”
- Goals: “What do we want to achieve?”
- Strategies and Activities: “How are we going to get there?”
- Milestones or Benchmarks: “How will we know we are on the right track?”
- Outcomes: “What were the results?”

## THE EVALUATION PROCESS: PROGRAM EVALUATION LOGIC AND DEVELOPMENT PHASES

Evaluation determines truancy program effectiveness through various assessments addressing program goals and objectives and the strategies and activities aimed at accomplishing them. Whatever the benefits targeted by evaluation efforts, the processes of evaluation must be adapted to particular program goals, objectives, issues, and contexts. This complex of factors can be effectively addressed through a logical sequence of developmental evaluation phases.

Truancy reduction program development itself progresses through a sequence of usually overlapping phases. The first steps in truancy program planning involve definition of the problems to be addressed in a particular setting, determination of goals and objectives defining the intended results of the program, and the means of achieving them. These program planning and design steps are also the first steps in the evaluation of a project. Program evaluation progresses through several identifiable stages or phases from initial planning through final reporting. Smink and Stank (1992) proposed a useful model of such evaluation phases in connection with dropout prevention programs. This model serves as well for defining a sequence of evaluation stages for truancy programs and includes the following phases (adapted from Smink and Stank, 1992, p. 4).

- *Phase I Identification of program components, elements, procedures, and activities to be evaluated*
- *Phase II Generation of evaluation questions*
- *Phase III Selection of evaluation design and procedures for data collection and analyses*
- *Phase IV Instrumentation*
- *Phase V Data collection, analysis, summarization, and interpretation*
- *Phase VI Preparation of the evaluation report*

These phases of evaluation reflect an underlying logic of development represented by the stepwise “basic logic or general pattern of reasoning” of evaluation proposed by Scriven and which is discussed by Fournier. This developmental logic comprises the following processes:

1. *Establishing criteria of merit.* On what dimensions must the evaluand [thing being evaluated] do well?
2. *Constructing standards.* How well should the evaluand perform?
3. *Measuring performance and comparing with standards.* How well did the evaluand perform?
4. *Synthesizing and integrating data into a judgment of merit or worth.* What is the merit or worth of the evaluand? (Fournier, 1995, as cited in Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999)

The procedural phase model proposed by Smink and Stank cited above will provide a general structure for the following discussion of evaluation for truancy reduction programs.

## PHASE I: IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS, ELEMENTS, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES TO BE EVALUATED

The identification of components and activities to be addressed in evaluation is based on examination of the goals, objectives, and strategies envisioned for a truancy reduction program. Smink and Stank (1992) propose the following steps for this process:

1. Review program description, proposal, and materials.
2. Analyze overall program goals and objectives for each component of the program.
3. Prepare a list of the elements within each program component about which information is needed [for evaluation analyses].
4. Submit preliminary list of elements to be evaluated to vested interest groups for reaction, expansion and approval.
5. Have final list of elements approved by [program planners] and by vested interest groups involved with the program.
6. Prepare summary of elements [to be evaluated]. (p. 7)



## Developing Program Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Since they form the foundation for truancy program evaluation, the processes of developing appropriate goals, objectives, and strategies are critical to the design of all procedural and analytical aspects of evaluation. Evaluation designs should relate to (1) goals based on the shared vision of the collaborative, (2) objectives describing what will be done to achieve the goals, and (3) strategies or activities designed to accomplish each objective.

**Goal Definition:** Goals state the final outcomes that will be accomplished by the truancy program and include the following characteristics:

- They are directly related to the collaborative's vision statement.
- They are realistic and attainable.
- They are well-defined and clearly written.
- They are logically related to program objectives.

The goal definition process brings truancy program planners into contact with a "criterion problem" in determining what specifications of program outcome can be considered meaningfully related to causes of truancy as well as to measures of program effect. An approach to dealing with this double-barreled dilemma is to ground goal selection in consideration of fundamental risk factors that either create motivations to skip school or amplify them. Examples of such risk factors include:

- Chronic academic difficulties
- Lack of parental or home support for school attendance
- Crime, bullying, or other threats in the school setting
- Unsupportive relationships between high-risk students and school authorities
- Attractive nuisances in students' social fields such as gangs, drugs, or even employment
- Family or social pressures to engage in nonschool attendance for reasons such as earning money or tending to younger siblings

Program goals conceptualized in terms of their pertinence to reducing the impact of such risk factors promoting truancy will

have conceptual meaningfulness as valid evaluation criteria representing positive program effects in terms of specified outcomes.

**Objective Statement:** In developing objectives it is essential to review each goal and create at least one objective for each goal. To the extent possible, consider relevant research, literature reviews, previous data, trends, and other sources of information on best practices. There are two types of objectives: *process objectives*, which describe how a program will be implemented, and *outcome objectives*, which describe the expected results or outcomes. Either type of objective should be stated in measurable or at least objectively observable terms. A well-written program objective should have the following characteristics:

- Describes a desired *process* or *outcome* rather than a specific strategy for accomplishing the process or outcome
- Is clearly stated in measurable terms that
  - define *who* will change
  - define *what* will change
  - define *when* change will occur (e.g., as a timeline of “milestones”)
- Often defines *how much* change will occur at interim times or at program conclusion when sources of information allow for sufficiently precise projections
- Is logically related to one or more specific strategies directly intended to realize the objective

**Strategy Specification:** A *strategy* describes the activity that will be implemented in order to achieve the objective. Planning or selecting effective strategies should involve the following:

- Carefully considering the intent of the objective
- Reviewing available activities and core services
- Reviewing related best practices research
- Determining the personnel and resources needed
- Identifying the personnel and resources available
- Determining the amount of time required
- Determining the amount of time available
- Considering the appropriateness of potential strategies for your participants (e.g., age, gender, race, culture, etc.)

As examples to demonstrate the relationships among program goals, objectives, and strategies, two objectives and the strategies for achieving each of them for a school-based project to reduce truancy (the goal) could include the following:

**Objective 1.** By midyear, teachers and school administrators will demonstrate improved skills for dealing with student diversity by passing the end-of-training assessment and by receiving positive feedback from students on teacher and principal evaluation forms at the end of the year.

**Strategy A.** Teachers and school administrators will attend eight hours of training on dealing with students from different cultural backgrounds, ethnic origins, and races.

**Strategy B.** Teachers and school administrators will pass an end-of-training assessment.

**Strategy C.** Students will evaluate teachers and school administrators on their attitudes to student diversity.

**Objective 2.** By midyear, parents, families, or caregivers will show evidence of learning the attendance requirements of the school district during a formal interview session.

**Strategy A.** Parents, family members, or caregivers will attend a two-hour conference session explaining the school district's attendance policy.

**Strategy B.** A formal interview will be conducted at the end of the conference session to determine if the parents, family members, or caregivers have understood the attendance requirements.

## PHASE II: GENERATION OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Evaluation questions in program evaluation serve the same purpose as hypotheses in conventional research design. These questions specify and operationalize criteria for determining at a targeted level of rigor the evaluation's results as a basis for assessing the program's effectiveness in pursuing and achieving its goals. That is, tied to the goal, objective, and strategy specifications, evaluation questions structure the methods of de-

termining the program's *value*. Rossi, Freeman, and Lipsey (2000, p. 81) describe a "good evaluation question" as follows:

The form evaluation questions should take is shaped by the functions they perform. Their principal role is to focus the evaluation on those areas of program performance at issue for key decisionmakers and stakeholders and to facilitate development of a design for data collection that will provide meaningful information about how well the program is performing. A good evaluation question, therefore, must identify a distinct dimension of program performance that is at issue and do so in such a way that the quality of the performance can be credibly assessed. Such assessment, in turn, requires an accurate description of the nature of the performance and some standard by which it can be evaluated . . . . Thus a good evaluation question must specify some measurable or observable dimension of program performance in reference to the criterion by which that performance is to be judged.

Evaluation questions relate directly to the "criterion problem" of determining what can be usefully measured or observed that will demonstrate a program's value in reducing the impact of risk factors promoting truancy, the risk factors that drive the selection of truancy program goals. Several sample questions will illustrate how operational evaluation questions can be clearly related to truancy risk factors.

### **Example Process Evaluation Questions:**

Did all project partners participate in planning sessions for development of interagency communication linkages to maximize appropriate services to each truant identified for project participation? What obstacles were identified that restricted participation, and how were they addressed?

Were all project partners equipped with adequate resources to support their planned contribution to accomplishment of client services? If not, what modifications were made to budgets to allow for their full participation?

Did all truant student mentors attend the entire sequence of training sessions provided by family court and school staff? How were the nonattendees identified, and what changes were made for their full participation in future meetings?

Were any school district policies restrictive in the identification of truant students? How were they modified to meet the objectives of the truancy project?

### **Example Outcome Evaluation Questions:**

Were 90% of students identified as truants during the project year assigned to family court-based mentors in lieu of incarceration in state schools? *(This question specifies a quantitative criterion and a time frame for evaluation of program operation. The question relates to truancy risk due to inadequate adult supervision and support and also to alienation risks associated with truancy reduction interventions that involve separation of students from home and family and from regular school settings.)*

Did 90% of program participants complete and present a personal plan for high school completion, graduation, and post-high school career training? *(This program outcome question specifies a quantitative criterion for achievement of a specified goal of individual life planning and addresses truancy risks associated with low valuing of school and lack of long-range expectations and planning by participants.)*

Did 90% of program participants demonstrate at least one grade letter improvement in final grades in English and Mathematics classes for their current school year compared to the baseline year? *(This question specifies a quantitative criterion, time frame, and comparison basis for assessing the impact of program interventions on academic performance in critical course areas and addresses truancy risk associated with low academic achievement.)*

Did student attendance among identified truants decline 75% during the project year in comparison with the number of truancy events that occurred during the baseline year? *(This question specifies a quantitative criterion, time frame, and comparison basis for evaluation analysis. This is a final outcome question that relates to the total constellation of risk factors pertinent to the rationale for the truancy reduction program design and addresses the global effect of all interventions by all contributing partners.)*

## PHASE III: SELECTION OF EVALUATION DESIGN AND PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES

### Choosing an Evaluation Design

Many federal grant programs call on educational practitioners to use “scientifically-based research” to guide their decisions about which interventions to implement. The field of K-12 education contains a vast array of interventions that claim to improve educational outcomes. The supporting evidence, however, often consists of poorly designed studies. Education has seen many interventions introduced that profess to produce dramatic gains but ultimately yield little in the way of positive and lasting improvement. The type of evaluation design used is critical to valid judgment of the effectiveness of an intervention program.

There are several factors to consider in choosing an evaluation research design. The first factor is the *purpose* of the evaluation. When evaluation is conducted to answer formative (process) questions (e.g., how well is the program operating, does it need to be refined?), the ability to make a causal link may be less important than when it is conducted for high-stakes, summative (outcome) purposes (e.g., has the program met its objectives, should it be continued?). The second factor that needs to be considered is *feasibility*. Generally, less rigorous research models are easier to implement than more rigorous models. For example, an evaluation design with random assignment of students to intervention and control groups, a primary criterion for controlled experimental research, is often not feasible in many real world settings. The use of naturally existing comparison groups, while less rigorous, is often more feasible in actual practice (Yap, Aldersebaes, Railsback, Shaughnessy, & Speth, 2000) and may be the highest level of research group assignment possible in a particular program situation.

A guide produced by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences, *Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide* (2003), seeks to provide educational practitioners with tools to distinguish practices supported by rigorous evidence from those that are not. The guide describes three evaluation designs popular in educational evaluation: pre-post study, comparison group study, and randomized controlled group study.

**Pre-Post Study Designs.** Probably the most widely used method in education is a pre-post-test design. A pre-post study examines whether participants in an intervention improve, stay the same, or regress during the course of the intervention, and then credits any improvement or regression to the intervention. For example, a school may want to determine if a parent notification system will reduce the number of absences among students. Data is collected on the number of student absences prior to initiating the notification system and the number of absences several months later. The pre-test data is compared with the post-test data to determine the effectiveness of the notification system. The problem with this type of study is that, without reference to a control group, it cannot answer whether the participants' improvement or decline would have occurred anyway, even without the intervention.

**Comparison Group Study Design.** A comparison group study design (also known as quasi-experimental design) compares outcomes for students who participate in the intervention (experimental or treatment group) with outcomes for a non-participating group (comparison group) with the assignment of students to groups being nonrandomized but based on some other grouping process. For example, suppose you want to use a comparison-group study to test whether a truancy intervention program is effective. You would compare the attendance of students who participate in the intervention program with the performance of a comparison group of students who do not participate in program. The comparison group might be students in neighboring classrooms or schools that don't use the program. The difference in attendance between the intervention and comparison groups following the intervention would represent the estimated effect of the program. Well-matched comparison-group studies can be valuable in generating hypotheses about what works, but their results need to be confirmed in randomized controlled trials for validation of cause and effect relationships.

**Randomized Controlled Group Study Design.** Although the most difficult design to implement, there is persuasive evidence that the randomized controlled group study is superior to other evaluation designs in measuring an intervention's true effect. Randomized controlled trials are studies that randomly assign individuals to an intervention group or to a control group in order to measure the effects of the intervention. For

example, in testing whether a mentoring program for third-graders is effective in reducing truancy, a large number of third-grade students would be randomly assigned to either an intervention group, which uses mentoring, or to a control group, which does not. The attendance of both groups is then measured over time. The difference in attendance between the two groups would represent the effect of the mentoring program compared to no mentoring program.

Random assignment of subjects (i.e., students) to groups ensures that, as far as possible, there are no initial differences in the group memberships systematically influencing and biasing outcome measures of the phenomena of interest. The unique advantage of random assignment is that it enables a program to evaluate whether the intervention itself caused the observed outcomes rather than pre-existing differences between the groups in other characteristics that affect the outcome. Therefore, the resulting difference in outcomes between the intervention and control groups can confidently be attributed to the intervention and not to preexisting differences between the memberships of the two groups.

A potentially problematic aspect of comparative group studies using a true control group, whether assignment of subjects to treatment or control groups is randomized or not, is that these models require that some potential beneficiaries of the intervention being assessed will systematically be denied access to it, at least for the evaluation period. Rossi, Freeman, and Lipsey (1999) point out that

randomized experiments and other comparative designs can only be employed to assess the impacts of partial-coverage programs. Partial-coverage programs are those that are to be tested on a trial basis or, for whatever reason, are reaching only a portion of the eligible population. Only in these circumstances is it possible to make appropriate comparisons between persons who are receiving the intervention and comparable persons who are not. (p. 280)

The practical implications of intentionally omitting from participation in an intervention some segment of a population that may need the intervention in the interest of rigorous testing can be controversial in an actual program situation. For instance, a truancy reduction program providing a family involvement intervention to parents of half of a group of chronic truants but no service to parents of the other half can intentionally leave children of nonparticipating parents at risk of continuing higher truancy. Planners and evaluators



of truancy reduction programs will have to give careful consideration to justifications for such a discriminatory practice, the means of selection of participants and non-participants, and the special challenges that may attend obtaining research data from individuals who are not actively participating in the program. One method of addressing at least some objections to comparison group designs is to assure that nonparticipants in the program intervention during the evaluation process, or part of it, will eventually be allowed to be involved in the intervention. In this way, participation for control subjects is only delayed for a time, not denied indefinitely.

## PHASE IV: INSTRUMENTATION

### Data Quality

Selecting and using appropriate evaluation instruments, data sources, sampling methods, and multiple measures will help ensure that high quality data are collected for the evaluation. Several criteria can be used to assess data quality, including validity, reliability, accuracy, and utility. *Validity* is the most important consideration. The selected instruments should measure what they are supposed to measure. *Reliability* refers to the consistency of assessment results over time or repeated applications. *Accuracy* means that the assessment results are relatively free of measurement or sampling errors. Finally, data should also be *useful* and user-friendly. It is critical that the data be meaningful to the collaborative's leadership and program staff if they are going to use the data for improvement purposes (Yap et al., 2000).

### Data Sources

Researchers and evaluators have identified a variety of data collection methods including those that measure the *processes* intended to effectively implement the program and those that measure the *outcomes* or results of the program.

**Process Measures.** Process measures (sometimes referred to as formative measures) are data used to determine if the program was implemented as planned. The measures should include a description of who is receiving the services, identification of what services are being provided, determination of numbers of people served by the program, and/or an inventory of the number of volunteers and staff used to carry out the activities of the program. Examples of common process measures used in truancy programs include (Justice Research and Statistics Association, 2004):

- Number of parental visits to school for school-related events
- Number of visits to students' homes by project team members
- Number of interactions between teachers and youth
- Number of times project team members reviewed students' homework assignments
- Number of counseling sessions attended

In addition, there are a number of other methods for determining if the program activities are being implemented in the desired way. Such methods include one-on-one interviews of program participants, focus group interviews, surveys, on-site observations, and case studies.

**Outcome Measures.** Outcome measures (sometimes referred to as summative measures) are the data used to measure the achievement of objectives to determine the effectiveness of the program. Examples of common outcome measures used in truancy programs include (Justice Research and Statistics Association, 2004):

- School attendance
- Academic performance
- School disciplinary reports
- Post-school aspirations
- Arrests (number and type)
- Adjudications/Convictions (number and type)
- Substance abuse (alcohol, smoking, and illicit drug use)
- Fighting at school
- Bullying at school
- Family conflict

Data sources for outcomes measures (and baseline measures of the same phenomena) can include individual interviews, focus group interviews, surveys, on-site observations, case studies, and preexisting data in electronic databases and in paper records and documents.

## PHASE V: DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, SUMMARIZATION, AND INTERPRETATION

### Data Collection Methods

Pertinent data can be obtained from various sources. Archival sources consist of existing documents containing a wide array of data such as student assessment data, attendance, and discipline referrals. Typically, survey and interview data on program implementation and outcomes will come from students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Behavioral, achievement, and attendance data is gathered about students. While each data source can provide valuable information, care should be taken in deciding which data source may be best for which type of information. Using a focus group—which is essentially a group interview—is more efficient than one-on-one interviews. However, people often give different answers in groups than they do individually. Individuals may feel freer to express negative views in a private interview. For both focus groups and interviews, the evaluator should have a written interview guide that lists the questions and provides space to record answers. Good interview questions are open-ended questions written in a clear, simple, conversational style. For on-site observations, the evaluator needs to develop a guide that describes what he or she is looking for. During site visits, evaluators should avoid disrupting the activity being observed to ensure valid findings (Yap et al., 2000).

In many instances, it is unlikely that a single measure will sufficiently assess the achievement of a program objective, especially when the objective entails complex knowledge and skills on the part of the community, service and justice agencies, schools, students, and families. In such cases, the use of multiple measures and approaches can enhance the validity, reliability, accuracy, and utility of the data as well as decisions about the effectiveness of the program activities. Involving program staff and partners in designing data collection activities can ensure that the data will be used as intended (Yap et al., 2000).

### Data Analysis and Summarization and Interpretation

Planning and evaluation data are used for two primary types of analysis: *description* and *comparison*. Descriptive data can be used to define the needs for a proposed intervention program and to profile community resources, partner capacities, potential ob-

stacles to program success, and other phenomena shaping plans of action, organization, and collaboration. The magnitude and character of the problem to be addressed can be described through reduction and analysis of multiple types of pertinent information. Data representing numbers of truancy events, family court actions, recidivism, etc. help provide quantitative descriptions of various parameters of truancy in a particular setting. Precision in such definitions supports the development of appropriate goals which can be assessed via post-intervention measures for evaluation purposes. Qualitative data from interviews, on-site observations, or documents such as court records and police reports can be analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively to provide deeper and more nuanced understanding of the complexities of the problem and of the requirements for effective intervention in specific contexts.

Comparative uses of data are essential to the program evaluation process. Initial descriptive data representing the factors of interest (arrest rates, parental involvement, confinement sentencing rates, etc.) must be established as a basis for comparison with outcome assessments. Although specific criteria such as truancy event counts and rates can be assessed during and following an intervention program, effectiveness of the program cannot be adequately demonstrated, no matter how favorable the intermediate or ultimate outcomes, without a pre-intervention baseline of descriptive data with which to compare outcome results. Further, the pre- and post-intervention data have to be in compatible formats for effective comparisons to be performed.

Evaluation research data comprise two basic data types: *quantitative* and *qualitative*. Quantitative data is information which is inherently numerical. These data reflect phenomena that can be counted or measured directly or derived from computations on direct counts or measures of phenomena. Qualitative data, on the other hand, are not inherently numerical in character but exists in the form of words, sounds, and images. However, for planning and evaluation purposes qualitative data can be examined and summarized through both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis.

When the information to be analyzed is quantitative, it is usually adequate to employ simple summarizations through addition or computing of percentage proportions or rates of occurrence. Summarization can provide such information as the total number of trancies in a specified group of students (ninth grade students for instance) per year and for each month of the year and what

proportion of these events led to arrest, adjudication, or incarceration in state schools. These data can be further broken down into information related to males and females separately and to specific ethnic groups. Similar quantitative data for other high school grades can help pinpoint the grades at which truancy is most prevalent. Such summarized data can help define the parameters of truancy problems to be addressed in ways that, through comparisons with later assessments, inform project managers and staff of the success of their ongoing efforts and, potentially, of needs to alter intervention programs to improve effectiveness. Finally, these data provide a necessary well-defined baseline foundation for making valid claims of outcome effects for truancy-reduction programs. Similarly, data from surveys or interviews in which items require discrete responses in the form of ratings, Yes/No responses, or reports of numbers of events are readily summarized through simple addition or computation of arithmetic averages.

Qualitative data, e.g., interview responses, can pose problems for systematic analysis due to the nature of the information. For instance, if program planners interview 100 students and parents, or hold 20 focus groups with teachers and school administrators, they are typically left with large amounts of open-ended responses to questions in the form of written notes or recorded or written transcripts of respondents' statements. It is normal, of course, for interviewers to form their own impressions of the important points emerging from interviews or other qualitative inquiries as they go throughout the inquiry process. However, such impressions are not rigorously or systematically formulated and, although they may be accurate, are not effective in representing the problem or factors potentially influencing the potential for successful intervention. To bring precision and validity to these data, they can be summarized using quantitative methods as well. Although complex schemes are often employed for such analyses, some involving the use of specialized computer analysis programs, rather simple summarizations are usually adequate for providing collective descriptions of phenomena of interest to program planners or to evaluators.

Although a transcript of an interview or a focus group discussion usually contains a large number of statements, certain kinds or topics of statements are of particular interest in defining the problems of truancy issues for program planning and evaluation. For instance, interviews with parents of truants may provide a number of expressions of attitudes toward family court judges or their decisions. Such statements, though they will have

many forms and wide-ranging content, can usually be readily interpreted as representing positive or negative attitudes. It is fairly straightforward, though time consuming even with a large amount of such data, to review notes or transcripts and count the total number of relevant statements or references and note which are positive and which are negative. From this data the percentages of total statements that are positive and negative can be easily calculated. This simple analysis provides a proportional statistic that can be used in describing one aspect of the truancy situation (perhaps identifying a problem area to be addressed through aspects of the intervention) and can help identify partners to involve in formulating a relevant plan of action, support meaningful definition of program goals, and be used in evaluating project effectiveness through comparison with similar analysis of similar data at later times. Such analyses of verbal or other qualitative data do not, of course, exhaust the research potentials of the data, but typically program planners and developers are not seeking exhaustive analysis of data, but targeted investigation of specific aspects of the data that are particularly useful in identifying and defining problems for programmatic intervention and assessment of success. Such simple quantification of complex qualitative information directly and adequately addresses these purposes, avoids reliance on mere subjective impressions, and enables precise discussion in writing proposals and program reports. Further, such quantified data summaries are more applicable than other representations, such as lists of quotations of interviewee statements or photographs of graduating classes, in meeting the criteria for rigorous evaluation results and reports that funding organizations, especially governmental agencies, seek for demonstration of program outcomes.

## PHASE VI: PREPARATION OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

Evaluation reports detail the interim or final assessments of program processes and outcomes. Their purpose is to communicate clearly and comprehensively the findings of evaluation inquiries and to provide valid interpretations of the findings to stakeholders who have an interest in and use for the results at a particular time in the program process. It is the responsibility of evaluators to provide clear communications of interim and final results in terms that are meaningful and interpretable to the target audiences of the reports. Smink and Stank (1992) note,

The language in an evaluation report should be clear, concise, and free of highly technical terms and educational jargon. The data summaries and interpretations should be easily understood by readers without any evaluation background. An effective evaluation report will be understood by the target audiences without additional explanation from the evaluator. Decisionmakers should be able to justify program changes, continuation, expansion, or termination on the basis of the data presented in the evaluation report. (p. 33)

Evaluation reports can be either formative or summative. Formative reports are focused on supporting program effectiveness by identifying the ways in which programs are or are not meeting their criteria for accomplishment of strategies, objectives, or goals at various points along the way. This information is intended to support informed changes in program activities to optimize the probability of ultimate attainment of intended outcomes. Summative reports serve the purposes of final assessment of overall program success and provide a mechanism for accountability to all stakeholders.

Smink and Stank (1992) proposed the following steps in producing evaluation reports:

1. Write a brief description of the program, its goals and objectives.
2. List all evaluation questions.
3. Sort all data summaries and interpretations by evaluation questions.
4. For each evaluation question, write a description of the evaluation design, data collection procedures, data analyses, data summaries and interpretation.
5. Write the executive summary [and full draft] of the evaluation report.
6. Submit a draft of the evaluation report to the project manager for reaction and approval.
7. Make revisions and refinements of draft and submit to project manager for final approval.
8. Prepare the final copy of the evaluation report and turn it over to the project manager for publication and distribution. (p. 34)

## Presentation of Evaluation Findings

When summarized data are available for presentation, the working spreadsheets, tables, databases, lists, and other formats used for analysis and archiving are not always optimal for representing the content of the data in reports and other presentations. Narrative summaries and discussions usually are necessary to clarify for various audiences what the meanings of the data are. This involves interpretation of real situations being reflected in the data. Data alone have no meaning. Interpretation by the human mind gives information meaning. Interpretation, however, is far more susceptible to bias than are measurements and computations. Therefore, grounding interpretations of evidence of program effects in substantive data that can be traced directly back through a chain of analytic processes to original research procedures, results, and data sources will strengthen claims made for the validity of meanings interpreted from the data.

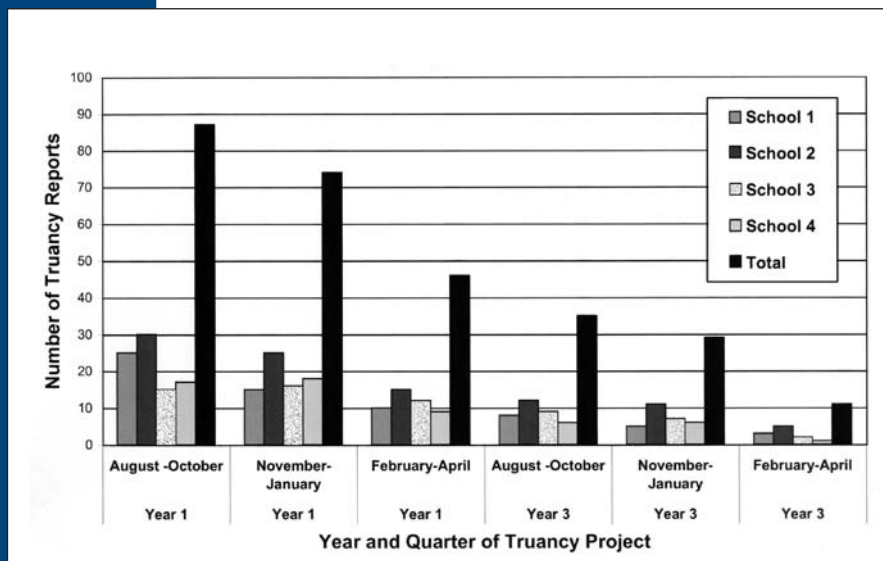
Clear representations of data will further enhance claims made for validity and accuracy of findings. Often it is useful to render summarizations of data analysis in visual form as charts or graphs. These representations support both the interpretation process and discussion and communication of findings and interpretations among partners and outside audiences. For example, Table 1 and Figure 1 below present the same information. However, the content is much easier to understand and discuss through the visual representation of the graph in Figure 1. It is readily apparent from the graph that the data represent a declining trend in overall truanancies due to the project in comparing the first and third year. The graphic presentation also enables the viewer to see at a glance that truanancies tend to be more numerous earlier in the year than later in both Years 1 and 3 and that School 2 has the greatest number of truanancies in all time frames. These fictitious examples demonstrate the value of visual representation of quantitative data for both analysis and presentation.



Table 1. Truancy Reports per Quarter for Year 1 and Year 3 of Truancy Prevention Project for Four Schools and Total

Truancy Reports per Quarter						
	Year 1	Year 1	Year 1	Year 3	Year 3	Year 3
	Aug-Oct	Nov-Jan	Feb-April	Aug-Oct	Nov-Jan	Feb-April
School 1	25	15	10	8	5	3
School 2	30	25	15	12	11	5
School 3	15	16	12	9	7	2
School 4	17	18	9	6	6	1
Total	87	74	46	35	29	11

Figure 1. Truancy Reports per Quarter for Year 1 and Year 3 of Truancy Prevention Project for Four Schools and Total



In summary, the use of straightforward and simple treatments of data, both quantitative and qualitative, can strengthen informational foundations for truancy program planning, assessment of program progress, interpretation of the value of interventions, and determination of the effectiveness and ultimate outcomes of truancy prevention programs.

## CONCLUSION

An effective truancy reduction program—just as any program designed to promote systemic change to improve the conditions of schools, youth, families, and communities—is dependent on careful attention to three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Evaluation should be an integral part of the effort from the beginning. Evaluation data can be used to guide program improvement by measuring the program’s progress in achieving its goals and can be used to refine or alter programs or services. Strategies to reduce truancy require a major investment of resources and energy. Evaluation data provides evidence to funding agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders that their investments are producing better outcomes for youth, families, and communities. Evaluation results can account for how resources were used and document program effectiveness to justify the costs of such efforts.

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## TOOLS

The Tools Section of this publication contains three tools designed to facilitate the planning and evaluation of a truancy reduction program: (1) Logic Model for the Evaluation of Results-Based Truancy Reduction Programs: Example and Worksheets; (2) Creating an Effective Truancy Reduction Program Design and Evaluation: Guidelines and Worksheets; and (3) Developing an Action and Evaluation Plan for a Truancy Reduction Program: Guidelines and Worksheets.

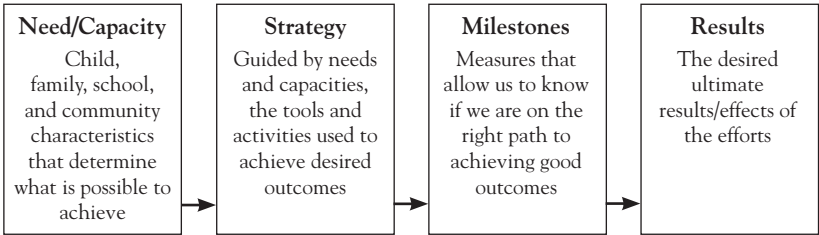
# LOGIC MODEL FOR THE EVALUATION OF RESULTS-BASED TRUANCY REDUCTION PROGRAMS

## Example and Worksheets

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### Principles Guiding the Work

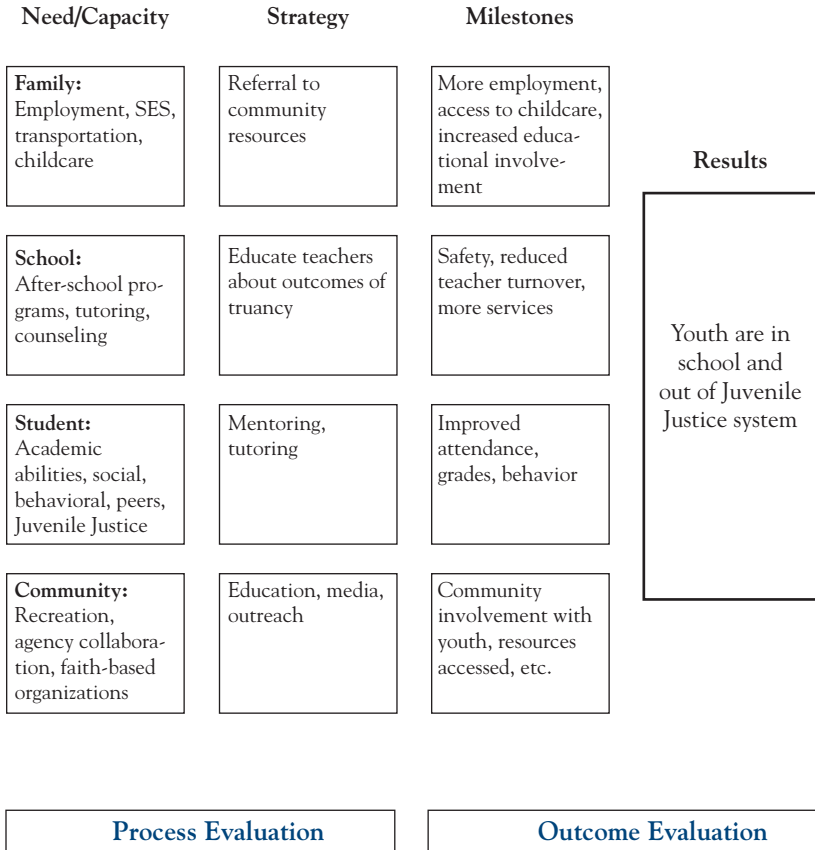
- Diversity is valued
- Families are actively involved
- Youth are treated with respect
- Collaboration within the community is critical



Colorado Foundation for Families and Children. (2005). *The logic model for the evaluation of the truancy program*. Denver, CO: Colorado Foundation for Families and Children.

Available online: <http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/21.pdf>

## Evaluation



Colorado Foundation for Families and Children. (2005). *The logic model for the evaluation of the truancy program*. Denver, CO: Colorado Foundation for Families and Children.  
 Available online: <http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/21.pdf>

## Example Worksheet

Need/Capacity	Strategy	Milestones	
Target Families			Results
Service Providers			
Target Children			
Target Community Factors			

**Process Evaluation**

**Outcome Evaluation**

Colorado Foundation for Families and Children. (2005). *The logic model for the evaluation of the truancy program*. Denver, CO: Colorado Foundation for Families and Children.  
 Available online: <http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/21.pdf>

# CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TRUANCY REDUCTION PROGRAM DESIGN AND EVALUATION

## Guidelines

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A program evaluation is a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the extent to which program goals and objectives are being achieved as well as the effectiveness of the strategies and services implemented to achieve them. Designing an effective program evaluation involves the following:

- Planning and implementing a data collection process
- Determining and using appropriate data analyses
- Planning and preparing evaluation reports
- Using the evaluation results to improve the program

### What is your data collection process?

A data collection process is a set of formal procedures and tools used for gathering information required to answer evaluation questions. Planning an effective data collection process involves:

- Determining what data must be collected
- Determining where data are located
- Deciding how to collect the data
- Planning when to collect the data
- Deciding who will collect the data

**WHAT data should be collected?** Determining what data should be collected is an essential first step in designing the data collection process. Data collection procedures can be time-consuming and expensive. Thus, when planning your evaluation try to resist the temptation of collecting unneeded information. If you have clearly written, well-defined objectives and strategies this important step will not be too difficult.



**WHERE are the data located?** The second step in planning your data collection process is to determine where the necessary data are located. In some cases the data may already exist and will simply need to be collected. In other cases, the data must be generated (e.g., questionnaires, surveys, observations, interviews, etc.) If completed during the initial planning stage of your program, this exercise may alert you to the need for additional records.

**HOW should data be collected?** Many different kinds of methods may be used to collect data ranging from relatively simple reviews of program records to complex assessments of knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Data collection methods may include procedures such as the following:

- Reviewing program records
- Selecting/developing and conducting interviews
- Selecting/developing and conducting surveys
- Selecting/developing measures of affective characteristics
- Selecting/developing measures of cognitive knowledge
- Selecting/developing observation methods

**WHEN should data be collected?** Making decisions about when to collect data is very important. As much as possible, data collection procedures should be integrated into regular program activities. In this way, your evaluation effort will be viewed not as a separate function but as part of normal program operations.

**WHO should collect the data?** While you may have one person (e.g., executive director or external evaluator) coordinating overall data collection activities, many people may be involved in actually collecting data. The answers to the following questions may help when deciding who should collect data:

- How often will data need to be collected?
- How much time will it take?
- Who has access to the data?
- Are any special skills needed to collect the data?

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Creating an Effective Truancy Reduction Program Design and Evaluation has been adapted from an evaluation handbook developed cooperatively by the National Dropout Prevention Center and South Carolina Communities In Schools for program evaluation of the Communities In Schools after-school initiative.

## Worksheets

## What is your vision for your program?

A vision is a global statement that describes the overall purpose of a program.

An effective vision statement:

- Is a positive statement written in the present tense
- Describes proactive efforts rather than reactive efforts
- Focuses on anticipated benefits and accomplishments
- Applies to all young people and families targeted for participation
- Reflects expectations of excellence
- Communicates a true collaborative effort and spirit

Write your project vision statement

[illegible]

## What are the goals of your program?

Program goals are broad statements that describe what must be accomplished to achieve your vision.

Write your project goals.

[illegible]

What are your program objectives?

Program objectives are specific statements describing measurable outcomes related to program goals. A well-written program objective includes the following:

- Describes a desired outcome rather than a strategy for achieving the outcome
- Is clearly stated in measurable terms that
  - defines who will change (e.g., program participants)
  - defines what will change (e.g., knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior)
  - defines when change will occur (e.g., by the end of each grading period or by the end of the school year)

Write your project objectives.

Goal #

Objective #


Goal #

Objective #


Goal #

Objective #


What are your program strategies?

Program strategies are specific actions, core services, or events designed to accomplish one or more program objectives.

Objectives and strategies for project goal #

Objectives	Strategies

# DEVELOPING AN ACTION AND EVALUATION PLAN FOR A TRUANCY REDUCTION PROGRAM

## Guidelines and Worksheets

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### Worksheet #1: Action Plan

Goal	Objective	Resources Needed	Persons Responsible	Timeline <i>starting date, interim dates, completion date</i>
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Worksheet #1 has five columns to fill out

**Goal** – Insert the goal.

**Objective** – list each major objective separately (what you will do to accomplish the goal). You may want to print multiple copies of Worksheet #1. One or more pages of the worksheet can be devoted to the objectives for one goal.

**Resources Needed** – Identify the persons who will be responsible for the objective and that the resources for the objective are secured.

**Timeline** – Identify the date that the objective will be started, interim target dates, and when the objective will be completely implemented.

These Guidelines were developed by the National Dropout Prevention Center for use with the New York State Program Assessment and Review (PAR).

Worksheet #1: Action Plan

Goal #	Objective	Resources Needed	Persons Responsible	Timeline <i>starting date, interim dates, completion date</i>

## Worksheet #2: Evaluation Plan

Expected Outcome (objective) Who? What? By how much? By when?	Activity	What data will be collected?	Who will collect it?	When?
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### Worksheet #2 has five columns to fill out

**Expected Outcome** – In this column list the outcomes or changes you expect (e.g., who? The affected group; What? Behaviors that are expected to change; By how much? The percentage or rate of change or improvement; By when? The date or period by which you expect the change).

**Activity** – What strategy will the program use to achieve the expected outcome?

**What data will be collected?** – see worksheet #3 to identify assessment methods and data sources you may want to consider.

**Who will collect it?** – Identify the person or persons who will be responsible for collecting the data.

**When** – When does the baseline data need to be collected against which you will measure your program's progress? When do the outcome types of data need to be collected, surveys given, observations completed, etc.



Worksheet #2: Evaluation Plan

Expected Outcome (objective) Who? What? By how much? By when?	Activity	What data will be collected?	Who will collect it?	When?

**Worksheet #3: Program Assessment Methods and Data Sources**

List each expected outcome and the activities designed to accomplish the outcome. Decide the logical methods for determining if the outcome has been achieved. What sources of data can you use to show that each activity is effective?

Expected Outcome #	Assessment Methods/Data Sources									
Activity	Surveys	Interviews	Observations	Discipline referrals	Attendance	Test Scores	Participation in School Activities	Social Services Report	Juvenile Justice Record	Other

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Dr. Ted Wesley** is a Research Associate with the National Dropout Prevention Center. He has performed educational research addressing program effectiveness, equity, and teachers' technology adoption in public schools. Dr. Wesley has served as a university administrator and as Project Officer for the Youth Opportunities Unlimited Alternative School project for the state of Mississippi. He has performed evaluation research in the fields of education, alternative schools, truancy prevention, community mental health, and community economic development. Dr. Wesley has a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership with technology emphasis and a M.S. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. He has been involved in the use of technologies in teaching youth and adults since 1982. His primary interests in educational technology combine focuses on the psychology of teacher adoption of technology, self-organizing system dynamics in school organizational change with technology integration in education, and use of advanced technologies for meeting diverse learning needs.

**Dr. Patricia Cloud Duttweiler** served as Assistant Director of the National Dropout Prevention Center from 1992 until 2001. During this time she was the senior evaluator for the NDPC overseeing third-party evaluations, conducting Program Assessment and Review (PAR) processes, and coordinating grants and research projects. Dr. Duttweiler has a B.A. in Sociology, a M.Ed. in Social Science Education, and an Ed.D. in Adult Education. Before joining the National Dropout Prevention Center, she was Assistant Director for Research at the South Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and School Leadership at Winthrop College in Rock Hill, South Carolina; a Senior Research Associate with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) in Austin, Texas; a Training Evaluation Specialist with the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education; and a classroom teacher.

